

India's National Gay and Lesbian Magazine

# PiNK —pages

Vol 7, April 2011

Pasha's 'High Noon and the Body'

## Rainbow Screens

Bangalore's third annual  
LGBT film festival

## The Men of Bangladesh

How the country's gays are finally  
breaking the closet doors

The release of 'I Am'  
India's First Gay Multi-designer Store

**“Just take the first step”**  
Celina's message to India's Gays



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# Editorial

Editor's Letter pg-1

The Inbox pg - 2



## Features

### Azadi @ Mumbai

The Queer Pride parade in Mumbai pg - 3

### Rainbow Screens

Bangalore's third annual LGBT film festival pg - 7

### Neighbours

The Boys of Bangladesh pg - 10

### Asfiya's Story

Transnational South Asian Sexualities:

Drag and performance in London pg - 15



## The Gay agenda

Of Pride, and honour pg - 19

Fresh Perspective or "Mirror"? pg - 22



## Lifestyle

Fashion: India's First Gay Multi-Designer Store pg - 26

Food & Drink: Mexican 'n Martini pg - 28

Health & Nutrition: Male Power pg - 30



## Culture

Movies: I Am, Philadelphia pg - 37

Books: High Noon and the Body, Colonies of the Heart pg - 38

## Regulars

The Buzz pg - 40

Ask Peer Queer pg - 42

Resources pg - 43

Happenings pg - 44

From the Blogosphere pg - 45





**Udayan**

**“** But recent happenings suggest that things might be changing for the country's LGBT community as they struggle to break open the closet doors.

A lot has happened since the January issue of this magazine. Not all of it pleasant. The nasty TV9 episode got us on our heels and the efforts of our community resulted in a small but significant victory with the channel being forced to issue an apology and pay a fine.

Better things were happening in neighboring state Karnataka, where the third edition of the Bangalore Queer Film festival had a successful run (despite the technical glitches that tormented organizers on Day three). The Mumbai Parade was the usual frolic with Celina Jaitley sharing the stage with gay leaders and her thoughts with Pink Pages (read 'Parade with Pride').

In our 'Neighbors' column, after Pakistan, Nepal and Sri Lanka, this time, we turn our attention to eastern neighbor Bangladesh. Muslim dominated and socially conservative, gays in the country make do with a raw deal. But a nascent gay culture is emerging in the bigger cities like Dhaka and Chittagong. We talk to Tanvir, a leading member of 'Boys of Bangladesh', the country's only organization for gay men. In a gender oppressive society, lesbians are worse off with an absolute invisibility. But recent happenings suggest that things might be changing for the country's LGBT community as they struggle to break open the closet doors.

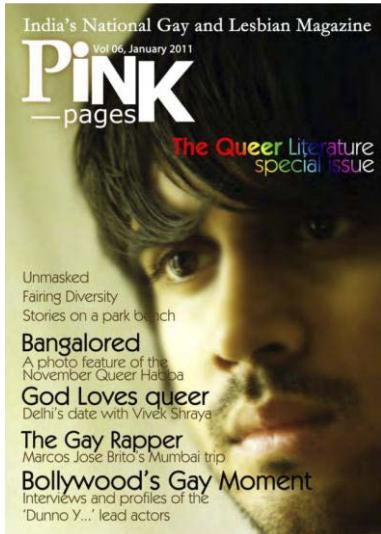
But closer home things are no more rosy, as within their families young gay people often reel under an oppressive heterosexist culture that deems family "honor" even above the happiness of their own children. And when heterosexual couples can be brutally murdered by their own kin for defying caste and feudal traditions, what can one say about the safety of gays and lesbians in such families? And yes, we're not even talking of a far flung village in Haryana- it may be happening in a Delhi neighborhood, as Tushar painfully discovers.

Also, I cannot conclude this letter without thanking our readers for the tremendous response to the January 'Queer Literature Issue'. It was our first, and we were skeptical about the response. But letter after letter from our readers suggested how much you loved the short fiction and poetry that was painstakingly collected and edited by us over a period of nearly three months.

There's surely more to come.



## ■ Letters to the editor



suicidal. And he converting to Sainthood , I don't know , because I have seen people who are saints in monastery "behaving", being bi or gay would soon catch up, the sainthood thing would be like a rebound, don't u think ? Having said that I loved the first encounter and how you reunited it at the end, the weather and the way you ended leaves the story awesome!

*Srivatsan*

*A Soap Bubble and a couple of revolutions*

It reminds me of journey, simply awesome Kishore Hadi Hussain

### Bangalore Queer Habba

Thanks to Pink Pages & Kevin for publishing about the pride event. Being the organizer of Party-Square & the member of the Pride Committee I really thank both of them.

*Nakul*

### Not so "queer" afterall!

I do not understand one thing here. If we agree, deep within our hearts, that the way we are, is

not a matter of choice, but it's our "natural" orientation, why do we ourselves accept that we be called "queer"... the dictionary meaning of which is "odd / strange" and it goes ahead to state "disapproving (of a man) homosexual". As a crusader, it will be great of Nitin and the others to take up the issue with Oxford and other forums the world over to stop associating the word "queer" with homosexuals/ homosexuality. The fervour in the QAM was missing this year probably because we are calling ourselves queer which is so funny. If u try to understand, we are creating a barrier around ourselves just like the word "harijan" has done more harm to the society than good. Even after 63 years of independence & supposedly advanced, barrier breaking benevolence, they haven't really mingled with the mainstream population. Similarly just by mere two words, straight and queer, much harm has already been done to the community. Let's believe our sexuality is something that has come naturally to a person and stand by that position.

*Sid*



### TV 9 exposé

The TV9 incident is dehumanizing slander and an assault on privacy and human rights. We condemn it and seek justice.

*Vijay Jagdish Mogli*

### The Queer Literature Issue

#### *The Other Man*

Udayan, Lovely composition, the description of scenes were perfect, unfolding right in the mind like crystal clear images. Very good storyline. I also would like to suggest few things, like the character of Shiuli - being journalist I presume her to be more strong than being

# PARADE WITH *Pride*

Former Miss India and Bollywood Beauty Queen Celina Jaitley who is the LGBTI Community's brand ambassador initiated the Gay Pride Walk on January 29 at August Kranti Maidan in South Mumbai. Jaitley found it wonderful to see a humungous turn out this year, and all the smiling people who walked for a cause. Sourendra Kumar Das meets her



Shouts of 'Azaadi' were in the air, as the LGBTI community of Mumbai came out on the streets to claim their equal rights from society. There was a huge change that was evident from this year's Annual Gay pride Walk in Mumbai, as many of the part-takers had taken off their masks and did not hesitate to carry their sexuality on their sleeves.



"One of the most proud moments spend this year was when I flagged off and started the Gay Pride Parade in Mumbai. I am glad that the Delhi High Court overturned a 148-year-old colonial law banning alternative sexuality saying that it was an affront to human dignity and legalized homosexuality," revealed ex-Miss India Celina Jaitley, who is the LGBTI Community's brand ambassador as she initiated the parade this year.



According to Jaitley the last wonderful event that she spent was Pride Parade on January 29 at August Kranti Maidan in South Mumbai. "It was wonderful to see a humungous turn out and all the smiling faces of people who walked for a cause. A lot of inhibitions about the community are shed through this Pride Walk, as slowly we are getting acceptance in the mainstream society. I guess in another few years, things will change and India will be able to shed away its homophobic attitude," reveals Jaitley.



So is there anything that is ‘not-so-happening’ in one of the ‘most-happening’ metros in India? Homosexuality was legalized in India by the Delhi High Court and the LGBTI movement lives on, making the development stronger day by day. “Still, I feel devastated to see so-called educated people in the society who have not truly progressed but only learned to mask their intolerance and hatred. I feel bad to see how certain sections of the society still lack knowledge about people from sexual minorities and treat them based upon their preconceived notions. The first hurdle was crossed with the verdict on July 2, next is the fight for social acceptance. It is only unity among ourselves that can build a community that is kind, accepting and loving towards each irrespective of one’s sexuality” advises Jaitley.

According to the ex-Miss India Mumbai has done a lot of progress in few years as she looks forward to Kashish-Mumbai International Queer Film Festival. “It is a platform that showcased over 100 exceptionally directed short films, documentaries, and even feature films contributed by national and international filmmakers and global activists.

Moreover, the various panel discussions provided a platform for the large queer community to voice their opinions about their status, standing in contemporary Indian scenario and about the evolving scene worldwide” feels the actress.





She tells the queer community that they have to take the first step in faith. “You don't have to see the whole staircase. Just take the first step and walk your way for Pride in the society...as after the game, the king and the pawn go into the same box,” signs off the activist with hope.

# *Rainbow Screens:* Bangalore's third annual LGBT film festival

Photo feature by **Dinudey Baidya**



The three day Bangalore Queer film fest organized for the third year in a row at the Alliance Française center in the city brought forth film makers from across the country and globe as well as the vibrant gay community in Bangalore.



55 feature films, short films and documentaries were screened at the film festival.

Hundreds of queer Bangaloreans turned out at the venue on all three days to enjoy the screenings and support the initiative.





The TV 9 controversy found its presence at the film festival venue too with T-shirts as this one making brisk sales.



The film festival was also accompanied with a photography exhibition featuring gay photographers from across India.

One of the high moments of the fest was when film makers interacted with the audience after their works were screened.





Tanvir

“

*I think still people here can't imagine that two men can live happily under the same roof as they never saw this in reality*

# bob



## boys of bangladesh

Thirty year old Tanvir was brought up in the port city Chittagong, Bangladesh but since his graduation he's in Dhaka the capital. He came to know about Boys of Bangladesh (BoB), a gay collective in the country, during his university days but at that time he was not confident enough to come out in to “the crowd”. Later in 2007 he realized that being a gay it's more convenient to be with like minded people. So he became a member and started meeting more people and

attended a few events. The crowd seemed decent and it inspired him to work voluntarily for the group and he is a moderator of the group since 2009.

He's working as a program officer of Goethe Institute Bangladesh. He speaks to *Pink Pages* about the struggles of his personal life, his association with the group and his hopes for the future of the LGBT community in his country.

### **Who founded BoB and how did it grow?**

It was Rengyu, a middle aged foreign educated guy

from an indigenous tribe who came up with the first e-group for queer Bangladeshis called 'GayBangladesh' in 1999. The group drew a good number of members (1000+) and was quite active online. However Yahoo! Removed that group from their website several times.

Initially the membership was restricted and people could join only by invitation. The moderators invited people they knew from chatting rooms, matchmaking websites and through other people. This all was just for security concerns.

The monthly offline gatherings continued for next few years bringing in a bunch of new faces each time. Apart from these events, the online forum worked as the soul of BoB where members found great solace in sharing their emotion and untold stories.

#### **What has been your experience as part of this group?**

I started with the concept of forming an event management team to take

care of the off line activities properly. Later I became a part of the management board and started playing role in developing concepts, organizing events, communication.

#### **What events do you guys organize and what work you've done till now?**

So far I worked for film shows, the first ever LGBT workshop 'Sexual Diversity and Coalition Building' in the country, the short training course on sexuality and rights and different day celebration. I also worked for a publication which is about to come soon. Besides there was always my involvement in the regular events such as yearly party, anniversary, Ifter party, poster competition and other events

#### **What does it mean to be a gay man in Bangladesh? How difficult is growing up and dealing with family and friends as an openly gay person?**

Gay as an identity is yet to be developed in

Bangladesh. The community is highly class based in the sense that only the educated and middle income group men will



**You can be anything you want to be as long as you get married. So lots of LGBT folks get married at one point of time. The concept of the 'sense of belongingness' or 'mutual understanding' is still not very common among the mass gay community.**



identify themselves as gays whereas the underprivileged class would identify with koti, MSM etc. Heterosexual marriage is compulsory in our society which is very family oriented. You can be anything you want to be as long as you get married. So lots of LGBT folks get married at one point of time. The concept of the 'sense of belongingness' or 'mutual understanding' is still not

very common among the mass gay community. I think still people here can't imagine that two men can live happily under the same roof as they never saw this in reality. But the number of visible gay man is increasing remarkably in Dhaka and Chittagong

It's not easy to come out here in our society as mostly the families are extended and people are too dependent on each others values and norms. The environment is still not very comfortable for a gay to come out and speak of his sexuality in his family or educational institute or work place. There is hardly any discussion about this in the media but in the very few instances the issue comes out as a fun/mockery.

### **What's the "gay scene" in Dhaka and other cities?**

Gay scene is still very discreet and thriving in Dhaka with an increase in the visibility in last 5/6 years. Still people want to keep their gay friends and straight friends in a different list. People believe that his best friend will not

remain a friend anymore if he comes out. Other than Dhaka, there is a very feeble gay scene in Chittagong, Sylhet and Khulna.

### **How tolerant is society towards LGBT people?**

The educated people in the society or the people who studied in the west accept homosexuality as natural but often it happens that in a class or in a work place not everyone accepts homosexuality. In that case people don't feel comfortable to come out and it holds back the whole process of acceptance a step back. Lesbians are invisible in the society though there is a small group working for a long time. Transgender are visible but people and media often make fun of them which is actually very sad. In my view, bisexuals are increasing in major cities but there is no research data so far on this. Overall, society tolerates it as long as you are keeping it private and following the social obligations i.e getting married!

### **What role does Islam play in shaping societal attitudes towards gays?**

In my view Bangladesh is a secular country and middle class people in Dhaka are not much concerned about the religious leaders any more.



**Overall, society tolerates it as long as you are keeping it private and following the social obligations i.e getting married!**



Religious practice in Dhaka is more like a ritual that people do because the last generation also did. I don't think Islam can play a major role in shaping social attitudes rather media can play a vital role to sensitize the mass people for their attitude. Nevertheless, due to contradiction with religion and sexuality, some people

do suffer from internal homophobia/guilt and tend to seek affirmation from religion.

**Calcutta (West Bengal) has a very vibrant gay culture since the past one decade, which happens to be missing from Dhaka. What do you think are the reasons for that?**

As India had its independence 24 years before Bangladesh; I feel the development is also following the same rate. Besides India is a multi cultural country where naturally people have the mental set up to be tolerant and accept the people who are not like them.

**What about gay Hindu men? Do they face a double whammy of being minority within a minority?**

In our society, the social values are so strong that it's no more a Hindu or a Muslim question. It's the society where gays are too family oriented and can't ignore the norms. I don't

think religious difference would be a major hindrance.

**What is the condition of gay women? Are there any openly lesbian women in the country?**

Gay women or lesbians are almost invisible here.



**It's not the right time and we are not ready.**

**A strong united movement is needed to pursue something big as this and our LGBT movement is at a very nascent stage**



There is only one informal lesbian organization and the leader of that group is somewhat out and open.

**How was the new of repeal of Section 377 in India received in Bangladesh, especially by the gay community**

**there? Did it make you hopeful for a similar change in Bangladesh too?**

Repeal of 377 in India was pretty widely covered by the local media though I doubt if they hardly had any clue what it was about. Of course the news was very warmly welcomed by the LGBT activists and they are hopeful of something similar happening in Bangladesh too.

**Are there any similar initiatives being planned (to decriminalize homosexuality in Bangladesh)?**

It's not the right time and we are not ready. A strong united movement is needed to pursue something big as this and our LGBT movement is at a very nascent stage. It's too early to step for that right at this moment. But the discussion is happening and we have had many meetings with other stake holders to decide course of action.

**What activities you BoB has in store for the**

### **coming months and years?**

Bob will work on its small and yearly events to keep up the safe platform. Community building has always been the top of our agenda and it will continue to be. We are focusing our energy to educate gay guys about their rights, develop their leadership skills and gradually get them politically motivated. Besides there are plans to introduce long term public awareness programs in future.

**How hopeful are you for change with respect to legal issues as well as societal acceptance? Have you seen any improvement over the last few years?**

Over the last few years it has been seen that more people are aware of the issues and feel confident enough to expose themselves. Now more people are visible in the gay community compared to last 5 years. People think in a more focused way regarding rights and acceptance in the society.

From Goethe-Institut we have been arranging week long LGBT festivals for the last 2 years and this festival is so far the biggest public event of the LGBT community. But so far there has been no disturbance in the event and there were positive reviews in some newspapers. This shows the increasing acceptance of the society which is very encouraging but it may be different when an individual comes out to the society

**What are the main challenges towards achieving gay rights in Bangladesh?**

Of course it is nearly impossible to gauge the impediments right now since the issue isn't out there in the open yet. But the challenges that we are facing right now are the ignorance of the mass people as well as of the community around sexuality and rights, lack of education, class division, patriarchal social values and the legal system.



**It's not the right time and we are not ready.**

**A strong united movement is needed to pursue something big as this and our LGBT movement is at a very nascent stage**



# Transnational South Asian Sexualities

*Drag and performance in London*



By Rohit K Dasgupta

(*Bade Miyan Chote Miyan*, *Dulhan Hum Le jayenge* etc). At that point I never really thought much about the complexities that exist within female impersonation. Used as a form of entertainment in popular culture, drag artists, were usually essayed by male 'character actors' of Bollywood (with the sole exception of some like Amitabh Bachchan and Kamal Hassan and a few others). My first encounter with drag was in a racy, appealing way in my fifth or sixth year in school, when I was asked to perform as Rekha, the legendary actress, also a popular gay icon. For me that moment where I transgressed my gender boundaries into donning a *sari* remains a defining moment. One of my distant memories of that performance was this huge laughter from the audience when I walked on to stage. In a flash second the idea of a man impersonating a woman being a social

I first encountered drag in Bollywood films in the late 90's

embarrassment was highlighted in my young life. I realised that popular assumption towards drag was equating it to homosexuality. Of course how true or grossly wrong that assumption is remains another debate. My own study has lead me to believe that items of clothing and accessories have this tremendous erotic charge within them and drag artists use this to entertain audiences. Of course drag is much more than simply entertainment; there is a whole idea of transgression and identity politics behind them. For some it is a moment of empowerment, while for others it is asserting an identity which they often cannot express, and for yet others it is just a brief interlude from their daily lives.

I first met Asif, early last year at Club Kali, a popular Queer venue in London, where he was working for Naz Project London. Months later I was able to witness one of his performances at the same venue. From the moment he transformed himself into Asifa and belted out Nazia Hassan numbers on stage, there seemed to be an electric charge among the few hundred audiences in the club. Not



only did we revel in this South Asian ‘queer’ moment, we also were aware of the power behind drag. The South Asian Queer scene is rather small in United Kingdom and Asifa’s performance seems to have helped the scattered community come together. Asifa is an entertainer, and has been popularly dubbed as Asifa- the fundraising Queen. With the huge financial setbacks to the charity sector by the present UK government and their ‘crackdown’ on multiculturalism, for me Asifa remains a moment of unity. I caught up with Asifa at Soho last week for this interview.



### **When was Asifa Born?**

Asifa was born essentially during London Pride 2008. I came out as a full fledged Drag Queen in the Float that Naz Project London did that year.

### **What gave rise to Asifa?**

It was interesting because, Asifa only ever comes out as a performer. As a man, I always had doors locked on my face. I used to get turned down for roles as a performer, actor, singer and dancer because I was either too effeminate or camp or because of my skin colour and this was in my teenage years. It got to a point when I was auditioning for drama schools in London, and I got given a place but because I had no money I could not go. This forced me to close that part of my life because I thought I could never go back there again. Naz Project London asked me to be their ‘Queen’ on the NPL Float in 2008. I

decided if I had to become a Drag Queen, I would use that for performance. By that point I had a lot of pent up frustrations regarding performing and when I took on this new feminine role, I decided I would use this to channel out the performer in me.

### **How did the name Asifa come about?**

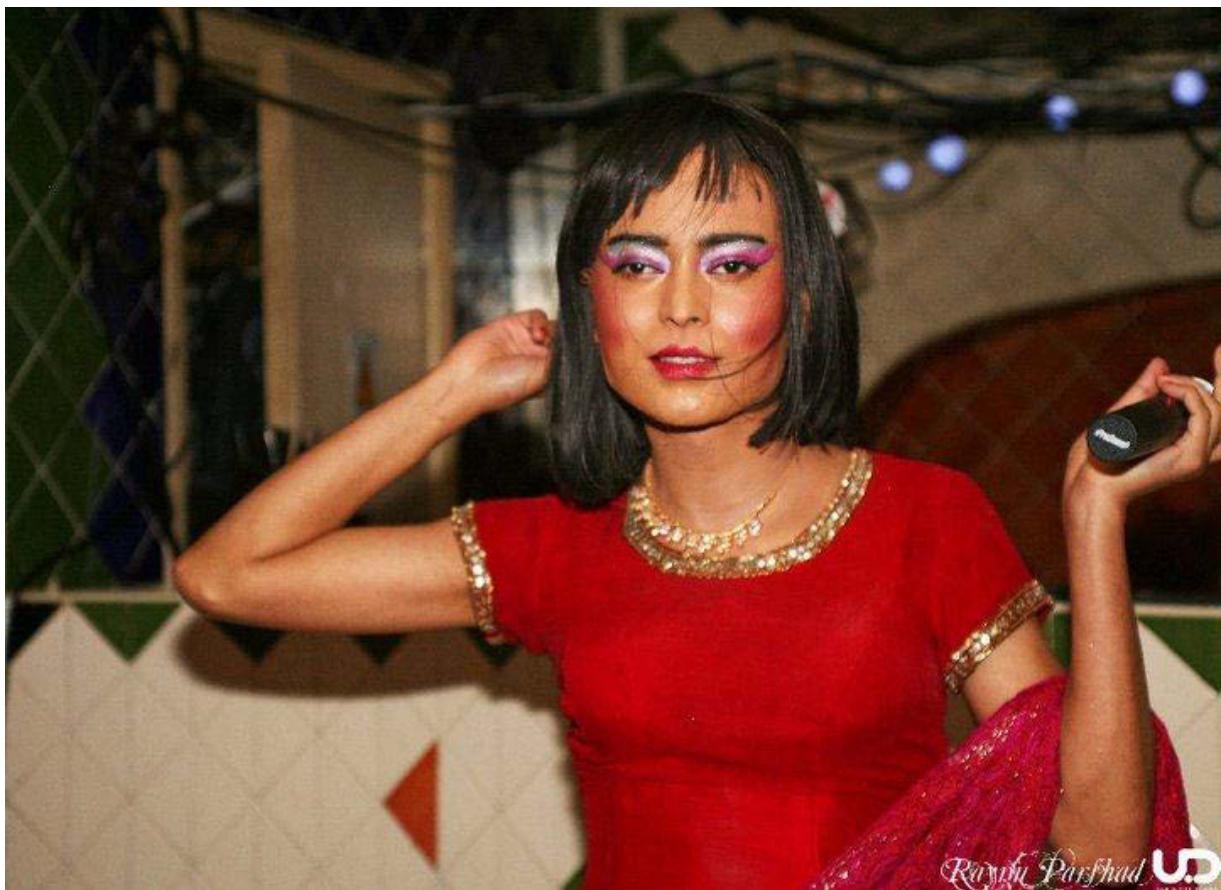
When I performed for the first time I did not have a name, it was just Asif doing drag but when I came down from the stage everyone was chanting Asifa so I just took up the name Asifa. It was my audience who gave me my name.

### **What does drag mean to you?**

For me drag is an outlet to perform. I can use the fluidity of this space as a singer, dancer, actor and performer to entertain people. As a worker in NPL, I use this to fundraise. I realise that because of my position I have a certain responsibility towards my community. Because Asifa is my sister ego I decided to work together. I like performing and fundraising. For me Asifa is an empowerment to perform, but also because the community loves Asifa so much, I can use this as a fundraising tool for charity and the community.

### **How has the reception been to Asifa in London?**

The reception has been fantastic. The first time I performed as Asifa was for a NPL event where I performed an Andrew Lloyd Weber number. I did not tell anybody about this and



it was meant to be a surprise. I was surprised by the positive response I got from the crowd. This was in 2008. After that I decided I would try this again. Initially I had only decided to do this for Pride but when the opportunity to perform for an event came up, I took it up very happily. I think everyone remembers that event only because of this performance. As Asif people already knew what I was doing, but as Asifa I got phenomenal success and it helped bring the community together. Every time Asifa performs, the South Asian community is always there to support me. I am not your typical South Asian drag Queen; I make my own songs, mash up bollywood with western numbers and doing what no other drag queens have done in London

**Has it brought the community together or created greater consciousness to Queer issues in London?**

Its funny you say that. Actually after performing in solely South Asian Gay venues, I am now being asked to perform at Camden, Clapham, East London. They are offering me good platforms because even though I am a South Asian drag Queen I am not just doing South Asian numbers. I am being creative, creating my own routines and at the same time helping in raising funds for a cause I really believe in which is underrepresented and under developed in UK. All this has an appeal not just within the South Asian community but the wider community as well.

#### **Who is the real you? Asif or Asifa**

Traditionally drag queens are a bit like an alter ego. You create a whole different persona, build up a whole different voice. Things you wouldn't do as a man. When I am in drag I am not much different. My name is Asifa, I haven't gone entirely away

from Asif, I use the same voice. Its not at all different. A lot of drag Queens feel pressurised to put on a whole different voice and personality, they have to really glamourise themselves and go over the top and there are politics involved as well. I am political as I am attached to NPL, but I have never really strayed away from Asif.

#### **How do you see your role evolving as an artist?**

When I performed for the first time, I only did it as a one off thing, but when it got such good response, I decided to do it more often, use it for fundraising. This allowed me to be more creative with the music and my routine. I stage my own shows, so I choose everything from the songs to the music. I have full creative control of my show. I choreograph my songs keeping in mind my other dancers abilities. In my role as Asifa, I am very lucky because it has allowed me to be a very successful drag queen in the South Asian circles in London, but at the same time I have managed to reach out to the wider gay community and also represent the South Asian gay community to the wider populace. I can be a voice not just for myself but for the whole South Asian gay community, because in London we are very under represented. Its great that I can unify the South Asian gay community and bring it to the wider gay community in such a positive light.

#### **Where do you see yourself going?**

At the moment I am venturing out to the wider gay community and performing in mainstream gay clubs. I have just joined the Asifa and Serginessa duo. Serginessa is another

ethnic drag queen of Portuguese descent. I am doing more shows which are relevant to the community. I don't want to forget my ethnicity or my roots so I am still very much a bollywood drag queen. I just like to entertain and continue doing this. I want to grow as an artist and just make people more aware about drag and use it as a form of empowerment. As

Asif I don't think I was confident going out to the wider gay clubs in London but as Asifa I am doing shows and being appreciated for it. I see Asifa very much an empowered avatar of Asif and I think both of them are very much intertwined in my identity.



*Special thanks to Asif and Naz Project London for taking part in this. You can find out more about NPL through their website [www.naz.org.u](http://www.naz.org.u)*

# Of Pride, and

# ~~HONOR~~



By Tushar M

I sat there chatting to my friend. Trying to advise him about getting out of home and living his life, when he said-

"They will kill me"

How many more such cases will India see? Hundreds of LGBT youth afraid to express themselves or come out because of family backgrounds and political influence. And in my friend's case it's even worse - he came out long back. And has to face the consequences of being born in a Jat family.

Across Haryana, UP, Punjab and Rajasthan, there exist countless families where the womenfolk are oppressed, and domestic violence is a way of life. What brings them joy and pumps up their

inflated ego is the pride of having a handsome son who fetches a gorgeous bride. And makes her work in misery and follow the kind of lives they show on daily 8 pm soaps. Which, strangely, the very ladies so religiously watch. That's a life of pride, and honour for them. And of course beating up the daughter-in-law or their own wives when the occasional slip-up happens. Which generally ranges from a slightly burnt *roti* to attempting to go out with her friends to watch a movie. Boy! (That should be 'Girl!') You've called for it now!

And what these patriarchal societies revel in is their political clout and their attempts at bringing 'justice' and 'order' to society by beating up and ostracizing *anyone* who dares to be different. And even more when that turns out to be their own son.



*Being beaten up. Silently killed off. And families staying mum and thinking "It was for the best, for our family". Honour killings? Of any kind- Inter-caste marriages, open minded women, lesbians, gays, transgenders. Why is logic and love and humanity being thrown out of the window? Why is it that patriarchal societies still exist and guys like Aseem face such torture?*

Aseem is the younger son in a typical Jat family in Delhi. He came out of the closet when he was 16; actually his step sister tattled on him. He left home to escape the cruel treatment and stayed by himself for two years, doing odd jobs to support himself. All this happened in a foreign country, and it is simply impossible for an immigrant and a minor to find jobs that pay enough for survival. He lived on bread and water, going without food for days, working as a labourer...that poor kid of 16. Bitter cold winds and just the same pair of clothes, unpaid rent, no food, and no future.

He fell ill many times, and then finally one time he fell so ill that the social service called up his parents. And then he came to India.

Years went by but things, and people, didn't change. The torture continued. Albeit less, it was enough to cause him to sit and cry; fight and get beaten up. And he got used to it.

A graduate, and working in the family job, he talks to me several times a month.

"So...any improvement?", I ask.

"I just want to get out of my house."

"Then just move out! Start a job search."

"They'll never let me do any other jobs. And trust me moving out is not that easy."

"What do you mean?"

"They'll track me down, create a scene at my workplace if I manage to find work somewhere. And they'll drag me back and beat me up for leaving."

"Get police protection."

• • •  
*"You think I haven't tried? It happens everytime. The more you fight for your rights, the more they suppress you. And beat you even more. I'm tired of this."*

• • •

"Yeah right. You do know that my family background is pretty influential. So many of them are in politics. The law stands no place in front of my father. And then again more beating will follow if I tell the police."

God! I was angry by now.

"Take a bloody bat and beat him up! How dare he treat you like this! There is a limit to non-violent opposition...go and beat him!"

"You think I haven't tried? It happens everytime. The more you fight for your rights, the more they suppress you. And beat you even more. I'm tired of this."

Damn, I thought. These people are ruthless. A father doing all this to his own child?

"It's all about family honour. They'll kill me to save their honour."

Shudder.

"They will kill me."

I haven't known fear like that ever in my life. But even through that chat window I

could sense what he felt; I could see him standing there in front of me with his face ashen and his eyes full of dying hope for freedom.

"Call amnesty"

"I can't. There'd be too much media...I can't take that"

"Well that's better than facing this everyday! Plus media attention will stay for two weeks and then just vanish...the media forgets you soon enough."

"But people don't. I'd not get any jobs anywhere after coming in the media's attention. No one would hire me."

"On what f\*\*\*ing basis?"

"Because I'm gay."

"But you can fight for..."

And I stopped.

"Tell me one law in India that prevents discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation."

I was silent. Faced by the shortcomings of my own legal system, the one I had all faith in.

I couldn't even say "It'll turn out fine". Because I didn't know.

How do I even know I won't be kicked out on the basis of my sexual orientation? Does my constitution guarantee me the same rights? I used to be so convinced that even if I have to fight for it, I will get it.

But on what basis? Can I go and say "According to section XXX of the constitution, you cannot fire me!" No. I can't. The XXX will remain unknown. For

a while. I hope there is change. And I get to contribute. And feel that my rights are well earned.

"I think the only place where I can be guaranteed freedom is abroad", Aseem said.

"Maybe you are right"

I think about all those out there in similar situations. Being beaten up. Silently killed off. And families staying mum and thinking "It was for the best, for our family". Honour killings? Of any kind- Inter-caste marriages, open minded women, lesbians, gays, transgenders. Why is logic and love and humanity being thrown out of the window? Why is it that patriarchal societies still exist and guys like Aseem face such torture?



Think what happens to Aseem everyday. And he stays in a major city. In the capital of India. Imagine the scene in smaller towns and villages. It makes me shiver trying to think about it.

"They might get me married off to a girl to save their honour. And there is nothing I'll be able to do about it."

"Oh don't worry. I'll rescue you from the *mandap*!", I said, trying to lighten up the mood. "That's be so typical Bollywood!"

"Haha. Count yourself dead then. Guns in weddings are common. And our people are pretty well practiced."

Ouch.



# Fresh Perspective or “Mirror”?



By Arijet

The diversity within the LGBT community is often overwhelming. Our sexualities aside, we often belong to communities and cultures very different from one another. And across nations, we are also separated by the differences in legal status accorded to us by the countries we live in. But if we look closely and compare notes, we will realize that we share a common ground with our compatriots around the world – our joys and fears, our inhibitions, challenges and our idiosyncrasies, are often uncannily similar. These parallels between our lives bring us together as a community allowing us to build bridges across nations and strive for the same rights all over the

world. **Arijeet**, who has moved to the United States, examines this similarity through his conversation with his **Billy Q**, his friendly, down-to-earth bisexual neighbor in Denver, Colorado.

**Arijeet:** Where were you born? Tell me a little bit about your family.

**Billy Q:** I was born in a small town called Taos in New Mexico into a moderately liberal Hispanic family. My parents divorced when I was about 8. My father was a school teacher; he is now retired and lives in the mountains of New Mexico. My mother now lives in a larger city, Albuquerque where she works as a nurse. I had an elder brother who passed away in 2007 at the age of 25.

**A:** Do you believe in God? Do you think God made you what you are with a purpose?

**BQ:** Yes, I do believe in God. I do believe that God made me with a purpose but I am yet to find what it is. I would want that purpose to be something that would enable me to make others lead a happier and fulfilling life because others' happiness brings about my happiness.

**A:** Tell me about your childhood. What was it like growing up in your family? Did religion play an important role in your childhood?

**BQ:** I had a happy childhood. And growing up with my brother was good. We used to rival with each other and that was fun. We would tease each other when somebody got caught while indulging in a

prank. It was a very healthy relationship. And I took an early interest in plants and animals. Whenever I saw an animal in distress, I would go and help it. I would often bring animals home and there were times when I had 5 to 6 pets at and that drove my mother crazy. And talking



**I do believe that God made me with a purpose but I am yet to find what it is.**



about religion, I am Catholic. It gave me an ethical base, telling me what was good and bad. It also made me who I am and helped me form my vision for the future. Particularly being Catholic, I got inspired by the numerous examples of saints who have put others before themselves.

**A:** When did you first start feeling different from the other boys?

**BQ:** I have always felt different. For example, I noticed other boys liked to do sports or to play war-games and I preferred to do things like gardening or playing with plants and animals. I also liked to play House and I always used to be the husband. *(Smiles)*

**A:** And when did you actually realize you were bisexual?

**BQ:** I'd have to say sometime in high school even though I refused to acknowledge it. I was 15 or 16. I noticed that I was doing things that other guys weren't. For example, if a good looking

guy walked by, I turned around to look at him while my friends didn't. My reaction would often be 'wow' when I looked at another good looking guy.

**A:** When did you first date a guy?

**BQ:** My first kiss was in college when I was 18. I was dating a girl but it was long-distance. I hooked up with a guy and even though I knew that the relationship with him was just a fling, I went ahead with it because I needed to experiment to find out about myself and who I was. It was very hard to do because I knew that it was wrong as I was dating



I'd have to say sometime in high school even though I refused to acknowledge it. I was 15 or 16. I noticed that I was doing things that other guys weren't



a girl and I didn't want to hurt her.

I started dating the girl in high school because we had similar interests and we liked one another. We dated for a total of 8 years and I went ahead with marriage. I came out to her before we got married and I tried to explain my bisexuality to her but she was not too open about it. So, afterwards, in our relationship, I tried hard not to bring it up solely to prevent any kind of pain that it might cause her.

**A:** Did you feel guilty after your first sexual encounter with a guy? And if yes,

how was that guilt replaced by self-acknowledgment and acceptance?

**BQ:** As I said, I was doing it behind my girlfriend's back and so did feel some guilt. But at the same time I enjoyed the experience and I felt I knew more about myself. So, therefore it was something that I didn't regret. But following the incident, I did try to ignore my sexuality, and then to hide it, because I wanted to be like everyone else. Among other things, I pretended to like adult magazines with just women in them but in reality, I really wanted to see both men and women in them. As time passed, I realised that it wasn't really difficult to acknowledge my sexuality to myself, but it was difficult to be open to the public about it. I kept it to myself.

**A:** What are some of the issues you faced being bisexual when you were growing up?

**BQ:** I didn't because I wasn't out. There were open and out kids who were teased, taunted, rejected. So, that discouraged me from doing the same, particularly coming from a Hispanic Catholic family. It's like a stain on the carpet. You can shove it under the couch and pretend it didn't exist. On the other hand if you talked about it, then you had to do something to remove it.

**A:** How did marriage happen? And how do you think it affected your sexuality?

**BQ:** Having acknowledged my bisexuality, at that point I was looking not for a wife but a life partner, and since I knew this girl, she was the natural choice.

She was someone whom I loved and wanted to see blossom into a beautiful person and I in return felt that with her, I could blossom as well. The marriage had its share of ups and downs like every relationship. I now feel that I needed to communicate better with her and not be scared of speaking out my mind. And I wouldn't say that my marriage affected my sexuality.

**A:** Tell me about your separation. Can you give some reasons?

**BQ:** I think we would both had our reasons. Initially after separating, I thought that I had failed at being an adequate husband. But now looking back, I think we had both given up working at our relationship. Again, when I look back, I have mixed feelings. For one, I let go of someone I loved deeply. But at the same time, this has given me the freedom to explore other aspects of my life.

**A:** Are you dating someone now?

**BQ:** Yes, I'm dating a guy.

**A:** What is people's usual reaction when they find out that you are gay?

**BQ:** Most people express happiness verbally. But at the same time, their facial expression is one of surprise.

**A:** And what is the usual response of a gay person when they find out that you had been married before?

**BQ:** Usually, they have to ask me again even if I had introduced my ex-wife to them: something like, "Wait, so you were married?"

**A:** Do you think gay people should marry? And given a chance, would you like to get married again, this time to a guy?

**BQ:** Of course, without a doubt. And yes, I would like to get married again because I want to set up a family unit with children. It doesn't matter if it's with a girl or a guy.

**A:** With all the diversity in the LGBT community, what do you think are some of the challenges we face? And how do you say we can overcome them?

**BQ:** I know there are many challenges. The one that stands out in my mind and something that I am fearful of is discrimination socially, professionally and religiously. By imparting more education to people, we can make a good beginning in overcoming these challenges.

**A:** What is your message to gay people who are struggling to balance a heterosexual marriage with their innate sexuality? Or to people who are being forced into straight marriages?

**BQ:** As an oppressed community, I feel the only way we can empower ourselves and make our lifestyles equal would be to not be affected by the pressures from our families or communities. We need to live our lives as we want them to be even though it may be difficult. We should not get into something that we don't really want.

# INDIA'S FIRST GAY MULTI-DESIGNER STORE



*The gay community in India is fascinated by their own love for shopping fashionable designer garments. The young, handsome and vivacious entrepreneur and a former student from London School of Fashion, Inder Vhatwar kick-starts India's First Gay Multi-Designer Store, D'KLOSET. The store was inaugurated by his close friend and the brand ambassador of the LGBT Community, ex-Miss India Celina Jaitley post Christmas. Sourendra Kumar Das meets Inder and steers you about a unique shopping opportunity in the gayest way.*

Mumbai streets offer astonishing variety of shops and boutiques but often gay guys look out of a safe space for shopping where they will not be judged for their looks and mannerisms. Nestled in the heart of a chic shopping district, near Mini Punjab in Bandra West, D'KLOSET is India's First Gay Multi-Designer Store where one can be comfortable looking through the racks of gay-friendly apparel line or space where some straight and pushy salesman will not breath down the neck.

This store has international designs, trendy clothing, stylish accessories, foot-tapping shoes, and the likes that add to a whole lot of unique shopping experience for gay guys.

"The store is airy and tastefully done with an assortment and colourful clothing by some of the most renowned international designers' brands, bling party wear, tee-shirts, trendy bags, sexy shoes, high fashion boxers and trunks, thongs, g-strings, swimwear collection, fun & sporty clothing for feminine tomboys too, head wears, belt, buckles, jewellery around neck or arm that a man would be happy to own," revealed the vivacious and fashionable Inder Vhatwar, the owner of the multi-designer store and a former student from London College of Fashion.

D'KLOSET opened just before the Christmas 2010 with the purpose to offer something different in the men's designer wear to ever growing gay community of young, funky and very individual fashion conscious crowd that Mumbai and the suburbs attracts. In just less than a week, it has become of one the coolest place to find funky men's designer underwear, trunks,



boxers and swimwear too. "In future we will also include more of gym wear, club wear, fragrances, accessories, flip flops and the likes as they are more in demand," said a smiling Inder.

There are lots of kinky stuffs in the store too, but there are certain naughty items that go missing! "I know since we cater to the modern broad-minded generation, there is demand for many other fun toys too. But we could not include any sex toys or racy lingerie as it is still illegal according to the Indian law," added Inder. However, there is 'Comfort Zone', a multi-coloured tiny sitting lounge outside the store where shoppers can sit and spend some quality time with their friends. Coffee too would be included into the menu, very soon!

There are often homophobic attitude of the society that makes it difficult for the members of the LGBT community to come out. Then how would Inder, in such conservative market conditions, come out of all shackles to scale up its business and shore up its marketing activities, forms the crux of the case study. However the young and spirited entrepreneur smiles when asked what is the gay guys' to the

stuff they can find here; as he explains that they have had an immediate following and had returning customers from the first day, and this even without much publicity.

D'KLOSET is situated on the 16th Road, opposite to the very famous Hawaiian Shack, near Linking Road in Bandra West, Mumbai. The store was inaugurated by Inder's close friend and the brand ambassador for the LGBT Community, the Bollywood diva and ex-Miss India Celina Jaitley post Christmas. The youthful and gorgeous Inder invites all the readers of PINK PAGES nationwide and abroad to come for a grand gay shopping experience in 2011 as he promises "there's in store a BIG SURPRISE for the NEW YEAR!"

**Where is D'KLOSET?** It's Shop No 1, Villa Queenie, Plot No 369, 16th Road, opposite Hawaiian Shack, near Mini Punjab Restaurant, Bandra West, Mumbai: 400050, India.

Call 00919820319195 or email at [dkloset@yahoo.com](mailto:dkloset@yahoo.com) for more details, Explore online at [www.dklosetonline.com](http://www.dklosetonline.com) or add them in [facebook](https://www.facebook.com/dklosetonline). The store remains open all days, from 11am to 10pm.



# MEXICAN & MARTINI



This issue brings you the best of Mexican cuisine and the most desirable Martini worth your vodka. Check out these two amazing recipies for your next party.

# CHICKEN BURRITO

## INGREDIENTS

Chicken Breast	1 pound, boneless, skinless, and cubed
Enchilada Sauce	one cup
Refried Beans	16 ounces
Flour Tortillas	8 10", warmed
Shredded Lettuce	two cups
Shredded Cheddar Cheese	one cup
Green Onions	1/2 cup, sliced

- Spray a light coating of no-stick vegetable oil onto skillet.
- Over medium high heat, cook chopped chicken for approximately 5 minutes or until chicken is no longer pink. Stir in sauce.
- Reduce heat and cook an additional 5 to 6 minutes. Add beans and cook an additional 1 to 2 minutes or until thoroughly heated.
- Spread about 1/2 cup of mixture on each tortilla. Top with shredded lettuce, cheese, and green onion. Fold into burritos. Garnish with salsa if desired.



## MARTINI

A martini is a popular cocktail which historically has been associated with class. Not to mention it is the drink of choice for the one and only James Bond. There are many different varieties and flavor of martinis but this article explains how to make the classic martini. Follow these steps to make a classic martini.

Gather your ingredients. You will need 1.5 to 2 ounces of gin (or vodka), .5-1 ounce of Vermouth, ice, and something to garnish it with (olives, lemon twist, and etc.)

Add a good amount of ice to your cocktail shaker.

Add  $\frac{1}{2}$  to 1 ounce of Vermouth depending on your taste preference. Some people will only add a splash of Vermouth and some will add an entire shot.

Add 1.5 to 2 ounces of gin. You also have the option of using vodka instead of gin which is becoming more common. If you use vodka it would technically be called a vodka martini.

Either shake or stir your martini. Some people recommend never shaking gin and always stirring while there is no recommendation for the vodka martini. You should try it both ways and see which way you prefer.

Strain your martini into a well-chilled martini glass and garnish with olives, a lemon twist, or anything you prefer. Enjoy!



# HEALTH & NUTRITION



## Male Power

By Karan

There are lots that fruits, vegetables, and grains can do for us, naturally. Food is packed with a multitude of nutrients, enzymes, vitamins, minerals, antioxidants and more constantly battling any imbalance, fulfilling every deficiency, warding off disease, targeting stress within our body and providing for a healthy immune system. Here are a few suggestions amidst many to help you look good, feel good and stay good.

# M

## Mushroom

Asian mushrooms such as shiitake and maitake have traditionally been eaten to increase longevity. They provide an excellent source of selenium and polysaccharides along with iron, protein, fibre and vitamin C. Studies suggest that compounds in maitake and shiitake have anti-cancer, antiviral and immune-boosting effects. Maitake appears to help prevent tumor growth and shiitake contains eritadenine, a substance that lowers cholesterol levels. Other varieties such as portobello have healing properties too. They're a source of the mood-enhancing B vitamins including niacin, riboflavin, thiamine and pantothenic acid and also rich in copper, protein, and fiber.



Tip: It's important to cook mushrooms before eating them to destroy the small amount of natural carcinogens they contain.

# A

## Apples



‘An apple a day keeps the doctor away’ is actually directed towards cardiologists. Research suggests that eating apples reduces the risk of stroke. They are the best source of catechins, potent cancer-preventive substances and a good source of quercetin, a phytochemical that fights the free radicals that lead to heart disease. Unpeeled apples are also rich in fiber, which benefits digestion and lowers cholesterol by sweeping it out of the intestines. Because they contain fiber and fructose, a fruit sugar, they keep blood sugar levels steady and hunger at bay longer.

than other fruits. The pectins in apples bind to heavy unwanted metals in the body such as lead and remove them from the gut.

Tip: Buy organic apples as commercially sold apples are coated with pesticides and wax. Having apples with the rind is a good source of the healthy pectins.

# L

## Lemon & Limes

Limonene, furocoumarins and vitamin C, all of which help prevent cancer are richly found in lemons. They are also a good source of folic acid, vitamin B6, potassium and flavonoids. The phytochemical limonene is anti-cancer and effective in dissolving gallstones. It is a great immunity booster. Limes have similar nutritional benefits as lemons. Full of antioxidants, lime juice can affect cell cycles. It can modulate the decision a cell makes to divide (mitosis), die (apoptosis) or even boost the activity of white blood cells. They have an antibiotic effect and are strongly protective against diseases.

Tip: The highest concentration of limonene is located in the white spongy inner part of the lemon.



# E

## Egg



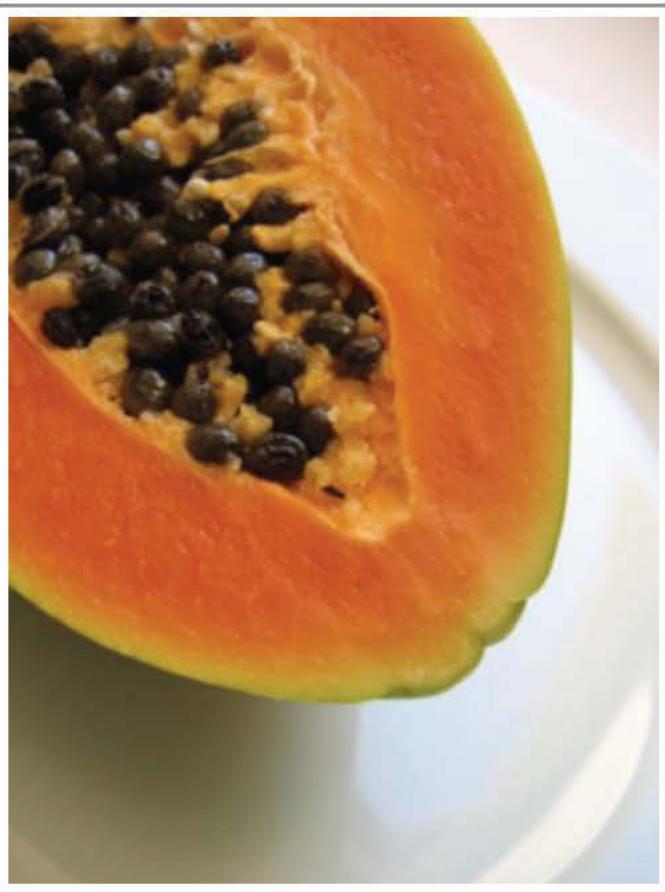
Unfortunately considered an evil, but removing the yolk one can take advantage of its powerful makeup of protein. The protein found in eggs is of the highest 'biological value', meaning that it is more effective at building muscle than protein from other sources, even milk. Low in saturated fat and rich in Vitamin A and E, eggs also contain vitamin B12, which is necessary for fat breakdown. It has naturally occurring vitamin D, which helps to

promote strong healthy bones, nails, hair and teeth. A good source of omega 3, eggs help increase good cholesterol, decrease bad cholesterol, decrease triglycerides and lower high blood pressure. They are an excellent source for energy.

Tip: One egg contains just 5 grams of fat and only 1.5 grams of that is saturated fat.

# P

## Papaya and Pumpkin



Full of beta-carotene, flavonoids and vitamin C, papayas are a good source of vitamins A and E, folic acid, fibre and potassium. It is an immune-booster and cancer-fighter. It's a source of soluble fiber, which helps lower cholesterol and of an enzyme called papain that aids digestion (it helps to digest protein) and eases inflammation. It helps heal wounds and tissue injuries as well as soothe inflammatory diseases like hay fever and arthritis.

Packed with beta-carotene, pumpkin is a low calorie food that is high in fibre. The richer the colour, the richer it's concentration of carotenes. It is the number one source of alpha carotene, which is a cancer inhibitor and more powerful than beta-carotene. It also provides the body with vitamins B1, B5, C, E and minerals such as potassium and calcium. It helps keep the digestive system healthy, control blood sugar and cholesterol levels.

Tip: Make a Papaya Smoothie. Throw in diced fresh papaya, some fresh lemon juice, mint, yogurt and blend. Add some more fresh fruits if desired. Pumpkin seeds too are an excellent source of zinc, essential fatty acids and a great source of plant protein. Helpful in reducing symptoms of BPH.



# O

## Oatmeal



A bowl full of oatmeal at breakfast can propel you through sluggish mornings. Added with power foods such as milk, almonds and berries can enhance the taste and potency. Oatmeal's star ingredient is soluble fibre, meaning that it attracts fluid and stays in the stomach longer than insoluble fibre like vegetables. Soluble fibre is thought to reduce blood cholesterol by binding with digestive acids made from cholesterol and sending them out of the body. When this happens, the liver has to pull cholesterol from the blood to make more digestive acids, and the bad LDL cholesterol levels drop. Oatmeal also raises the levels of free testosterone in the body, enhancing the body's ability to build muscle, burn fat and boost sex drive. Unlike other grains, oats do not lose their nutrients after being hulled and processed.

Tip: Oatmeal porridge helps target obesity by slowing digestion and increasing the sense of fullness.

# W

## Whole Wheat / Whole Grain

Grains like oats, barley, rye and wheat in all its forms — including whole-wheat flour, bulgur wheat, and wheat bran — is a good source of many nutrients, including protein, fiber, and mood-enhancing B vitamins. Be it for breads or pasta, make sure the bran and the germ have not been tossed out. These are the main components in reference to high nutritive value. The bran stores all the fibre and minerals like magnesium, zinc, potassium and iron while the germ packs the protein and vitamins. So if you eat products made with all the parts of the grain and not just alone the

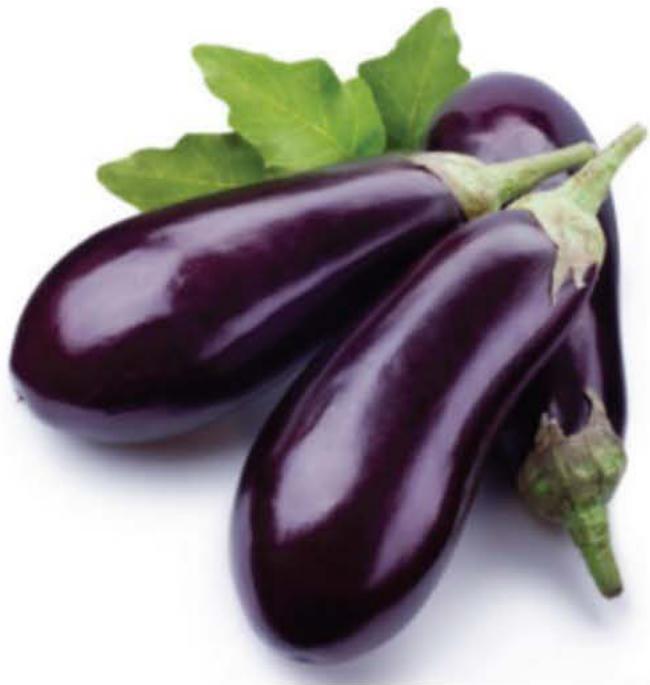
endosperm (starch) you will not be ripping your body of a nutritive intake. Whole grain products keeps insulin levels low, which keeps the body from storing fat.

Tip : Avoid white breads, bagels, doughnuts and breads labeled wheat instead of whole wheat. Buy only whole wheat or whole grain breads, pastas etc. Brown bread may not necessarily be nutritive as adding molasses to bread makes it brown.



# E

## Eggplant



Also known as brinjal or aubergine (and baingan in Hindi), this purple vegetable comes in a variety of shapes and sizes. In addition to featuring a host of vitamins and minerals, eggplant also contains important phytonutrients, many which have antioxidant activity. Phytonutrients contained in eggplant include phenolic compounds, such as caffeic and chlorogenic acid, and flavonoids, such as nasunin. Nasunin is a potent antioxidant and free radical scavenger that has been shown to protect cell membranes from damage.

The predominant phenolic compound found in all varieties is chlorogenic acid, which is one of the most potent free radical scavengers found in plant tissues. Benefits attributed to chlorogenic acid include antimutagenic (anti-cancer),

antimicrobial, anti-LDL (bad cholesterol) and antiviral activities.

Tip: Eggplant makes for an amazing lunch. Chop some onions and fry them with some garlic. Add roasted or boiled eggplant, mash it and add garam masala and red chilly powder. No need to add oil. Popularly called baingan-bhartha (brinjal-mash) in India, this preparation can be had with Indian bread (roti) or used as a hot spread on whole-grain bread.

# R

## Red grapes

Red grapes are superstars for their ability to prevent heart disease. The nutritional benefits are similar to that of berries. To receive the most nutrients, it is recommended to eat the seeds also. They are a good source of manganese and vitamins B6 and C, and also thiamin, riboflavin and potassium. Studies show that red grapes, used to make wine, contain polyphenols, antioxidants that help stave off heart attacks and cancer. Gene Spiller, Ph.D., director of the Health Research and Studies Center in Los Altos, California, says grapes and raisins also contain a compound called tartaric acid, which works with their fiber to fight diseases of the colon. They are an excellent source of health promoting flavonoids.

Tip: Make a Summer Fruit Salad. In a large bowl, mix 1/2 cup each red grapes, cubed mango and papaya, sliced kiwi, cantaloupe balls, and sliced peaches. Garnish with fresh mint.



This article is not meant to diagnose, treat or cure any ailment or disease but just impart information on good health and wellbeing.

# Cinema

## I AM FOUR STORIES, ONE FILM

By Sourendra Kumar Das

**Cast:** Juhi Chawla, Manisha Koirala, Rahul Bose, Nandita Das, Arjun Mathur, Abhimanyu Singh, Sanjay Suri, Anurag Kashyap, Purab Kohli, Shernaz Patel, Radhika Apte, Anurag Basu.

**Directed by:** Onir

I AM is the first crowd sourced film in India with over 400 hundred people from 35 cities across the globe contributing towards the making of the film. This latest film of Onir consists of four short films exploring such themes as child abuse and same-sex relationships.

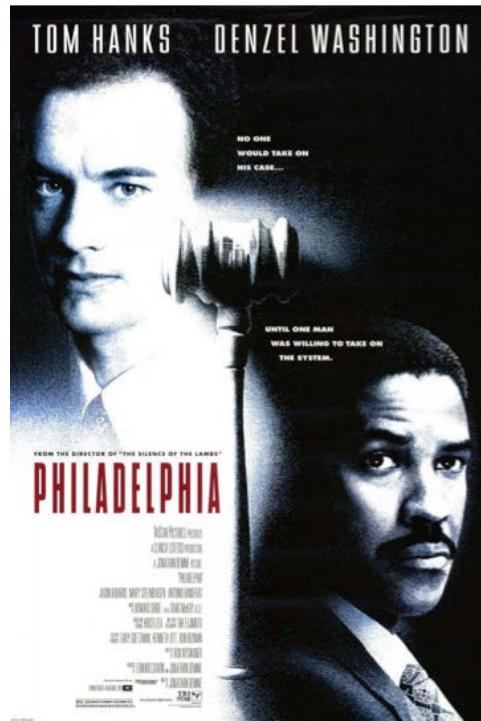
“I AM is a tale of 4 stories woven together that takes audiences through issues and dilemmas that bruise the modern Indian society” revealed Onir. The film unfolds many a tale of individuals struggling to find their identity, and uphold their dignity in a world that is callous, cold and unsympathetic.

There are 4 stories but the characters are interwoven with each story Abhimanyu is based child abuse, Omar on gay rights, Megha about Kashmiri Pandits and Afia on sperm donation. The scripts for Abhimanyu and Omar were nominated for Triangle Media Group Global Awards. It also won the Audience Award at the 2010 River to River, Florence Indian Film Festival, the Best Asian Film Award at the International Film Festival of Kerala, and the I-VIEW Film Festival's Engendered Award for Human Rights.



## Philadelphia (1993)

*Review by Arijeeet Chandra*



*“The essence of discrimination: formulating opinions about others not based on their individual merits, but rather on their membership in a group with assumed characteristics.”*

Made in 1993, the movie Philadelphia presents the issues of AIDS, homosexuality and homophobia. The story is inspired by true events where a person files a case against his previous employer for unfair sacking from his job.

Andrew Beckett is a bright and enterprising lawyer working in a top-notch law firm. His bosses are happy with his work, rather trusting his strong ability assign him an important case to work upon. One of his colleagues suspects him infected by HIV/AIDS by seeing a lesion on his face. Though Andrew is afraid that he has AIDS and his health is deteriorating day by day, he finishes his task perfectly. And one day all of a sudden, he finds his file about the important case missing from his table, also no trace of anything on his personal computer, he finds himself fired on account of ‘being irresponsible and non-competent’. Andrew

suspects that he is a victim of discrimination. He decides to file a lawsuit on his previous employers against his unfair dismissal. He approaches Joe Miller, another notable lawyer in the city to take his case. But Joe Miller initially refuses. Later seeing him in a public library with many law related books, and feeling that ‘a law has been broken’ he finally takes his case. Rest of the movie is about how the two parties in the court present their arguments, and ‘once homophobic’ Joe Miller’s eventual change of heart, and subsequent justice done to Andrew Beckett.

With marvellous screenplay, the dramatic presentation is rather beautiful. Strong characterization and a balance between the personal lives of Andrew Beckett and Joe Miller, and the court proceedings has been a plus point. Actors Tom Hanks (Andrew Beckett) and Denzel Washington (Joe Miller) are always remembered for their roles, the accolades received by the film makes a long list. For director Jonathan Demme’s this remarkable film is not only one of his best, but also by making ‘Philadelphia’, Mr. Demme had been successful in presenting himself as queer-friendly as opposed to the previous perception of him by the LGBT community.

It has always been one of my favourite movies, not only for its theme but for its cinematic presentation. There are many dialogues, conversations and one-liners that are hard to ignore along with several touching moments for example the scenes of Andrew celebrating his parents anniversary with his whole family and their support, encouragement for him. Also the intimate scene of Andrew with his partner Miguel (played by actor Antonio Banderas), though it being very brief impresses the subtlety of the subject. Not but the least, with a soulful rendition by Singer Bruce Springsteen, this movie is a must watch for every kind of audience.

*“Judge: In this courtroom, Mr. Miller, justice is blind to matters of race, creed, colour, religion, and sexual orientation.*

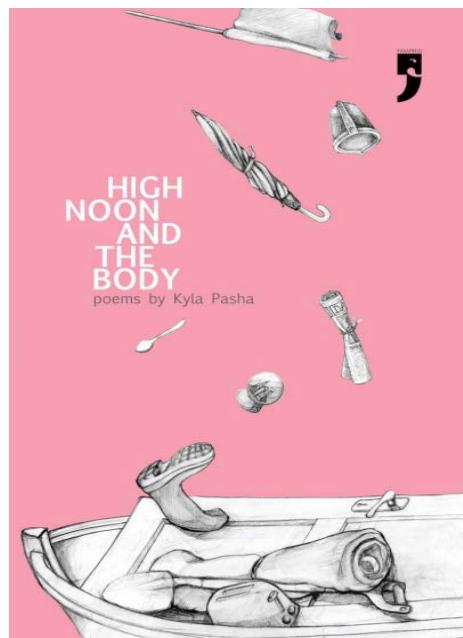
*Counsellor Miller: With all due respect, your honour, we don't live in this courtroom, do we?”*

# Books

## High Noon and the Body

Poems by Kyla Pasha

Review by Udayan



Kyla Pasha's book of poetry is an astonishing piece of work coming out of radical feminist Pakistan. This radicalism, the seething anger, the tender love is brimming in every verse of this brilliant composition.

Breaking the clichés of South Asian "women's poetry", Kyla's poems emerge from a maze of words, bathed in longing and desire, adorned with the sadness of a broken heart, burning with flames of revenge and ever-reminiscent of the sweetness of hopeful love.

In 'Marauder' she tells of an approaching savagery; 'Post it Notes on your door' beautifully talks of a love gained and lost; 'High Noon and the Body' speaks of the struggles and strife of female gender non-conformity.

One of my favourites was 'The Lullaby for Grieving'. I loved it for its exuberance of pain, the breathlessness of words, and its pregnancy with meaning.

*"But it plays ill to still a dance*

*And I have only an older woman's*

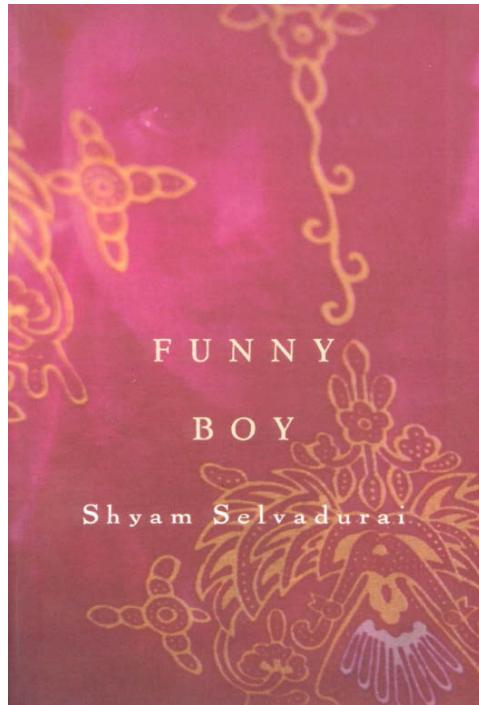
*Romance with martyrdom in breath..."*

Reading this 83 page book of poems, one feels an association with the tangibility disseminated, a life unwound and a rebel unleashed.

## Funny Boy

By Shyam Selvadurai

Review By: Tushar M.



Funny Boy is not a book about homosexuality alone; in fact that's just one chapter of it.

It is no doubt one of the most powerful portrayals of Sri Lanka of the 70s and 80s that one can come across. The way the writer describes Sri Lanka, the people, and the places is, to say the least, lucid. The way Arjie's mother puts flowers in her hair, the way the beach looks at sunset, the way Arjie stands there waiting for Shehan, breathing slowly, anticipating, unsure...every single sentence in the book makes you live the novel vicariously.

Funny Boy is the story of Arjie, a Tamilian boy in Colombo, and his family. The book is split into 6 chapters, each covering a part of his life, following him from age 7 to his early teens at a time when the Sinhala-Tamil situation was at its worst in Sri Lanka.

The book starts off with descriptions of his playtimes with his sisters, playing 'Bride Bride', classic portrayals of a patriarchal society such as concepts about what play activities were considered 'manly'. A headstrong Aunt and her love affair with a Sinhala boy, her mother's long lost love and his father's new employee – all of them ending up intensely intertwined with Sri Lankan Sinhala-Tamil politics; the book keeps the reader involved emotionally with each and every sentence that Shyam has so deftly written.

One chapter in specific deals with him discovering his sexuality, as he comes in contact with Shehan, a bright-eyed Sinhala classmate, and how Arjie reacts and responds to his new feelings, and to the taunts and disdainful looks of his elder brother, who figures out what is going on. Life in a strict all-boys school, mixed feelings, dilemmas, and courage; parts of growing up and little first steps towards discovering his sexuality are very vividly portrayed in this chapter.

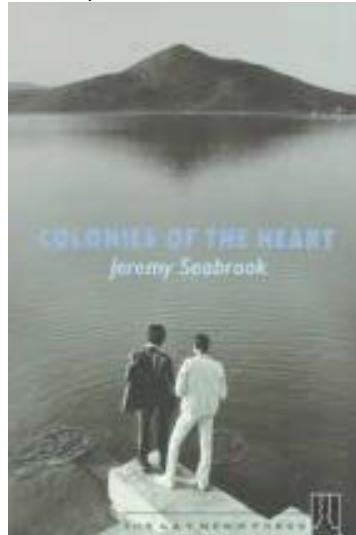
The bitterness of the Sinhala crowd, and of the Tamils, and how the family copes with it becoming a part of their day to day life, suffering, surviving, and finally fleeing the country at the end of the book; a very powerful message is sent across in Selvadurai's book. At times the reader feels intensely emotional and sympathetic reading about the helplessness of the family, the people, and the kids when faced with events and situations that clearly no one could have predicted, or maybe never imagined could be true. Horrific images of torture and cruelty, though not mentioned, conjure up in the reader's mind as they read about Uncle Daryl going missing, the attacks on trains in Jaffna, and the merciless burning down of Tamil homes in Colombo in 1983. It's in the description of these events that Shyam certainly appeals to the reader's psyche, as he describes how Arjie's Ammachi and Appachi were burnt alive in their car in the middle of the road.

As you close the book, the image of Arjie standing there in the rain, in front of his burnt down house, and the tears running down his cheeks as he bids a final farewell to Sri Lanka and to his childhood, stays in your mind.

# Colonies of the Heart

By Jeremy Seabrook

Review by Ratnesh



It would be fair introducing the writer first. 'Colonies of the Heart' comes from Jeremy Seabrook, who is more noted for his plays and documentaries on BBC radio and TV. His work involves the study of India's Muslim Ghettos, child labourers in Dhaka, psychology of sex-seeking travelers, the aging population and even child sex tourism. Jeremy is also the author of 40 odd books on social, environmental and developmental issues. The books of gay interest from the author are 'Love in a different climate' and 'A lasting relationship'.

'Colonies of the Heart' is a metaphorical take on the colonial past. Part one, Dilraj: Empire of the Heart is about the contrasting differences between western and Indian gay life. Frank, an Englishman befriends Prakash, an Indian hill lad from a very poor family. Trouble ensues when Frank presses the relationship on western terms on Prakash, for whom being 'gay' is an alien concept. In times of hardships and pressing claims of the family, Prakash finds his own world tottered.

Call it his ill-fate, Prakash is the only male member of his destitute family. Though a brahmin, his mother works for the Jamidar so as to make sure he never sweats. All the troubles and hardships were tacitly transferred to his younger sister as soon as she was born. Haunted by the drastic insecurities his mother has become more demanding than ever.

The story takes the protagonists on a journey of self-discovery and self-deception. The author details the uncharacteristic love-affair between Prakash and his English lover. Frank has been with n number of guys but Prakash

was way different from all of them. He was captivated by his hilly eyes, observance and accountability to the family. Frank longed for him day and night, and extended his stay in India. Surprising though, Prakash, untouched by the western ideas considered Frank as his 'best friend'.

They visit the little old village where fate is waiting for the worst. The widowed sister is diseased and needs to be cured immediately. The mother with her hopes held high as always, wants Prakash to stay back in the newly constructed home and marry. Amidst the unwelcome glances of the mother and asking condition of the sister Frank helps the family during the crisis and becomes an integral part.

The second part of the book, 'A woman's life' is a fictionalized narration of the mother's unsuccessful marriage and the repercussions of it in the author's life. As Seabrook says. 'my relationship with my mother had little to do with love: it was inevitable, necessary, an inescapable bonding by sensibility, a kinship of character; desolating, emancipating, crippling and enhancing. It took its course as any other natural phenomenon.' Like an alter-ego of Prakash's mother.

The one thing which does not make 'Colonies of the Heart' a 'read in one go' novel are the monotonous emotions of Prakash and his mother. The writing is many a times dispassionate, spread with tenderness at one moment and bitterness the other. The author fails to create any curiosity throughout the storyline. Not one of the best books on the stand.



# The BUZZ

*News, Views.. with a pint of Booze!*



## 'Dostana' 2 plans ditched?

It seems producer Karan Johar has finally decided to drop the film. Apparently the writers and Tarun are not able to put together a better second half than the original.

## TV9 DEBACLE



## Controversy and apology!

The year began on a nasty note as struggling actor Yuvraj Parashar accused noted film maker Onir of sexually molesting him. The story was gleefully carried by Mumbai Mirror. After Onir threatened to drag him to court Yuvraj issued an equally hasty public apology.



More nastiness. This time from a Telegu channel, TV 9 that carried out a "sting operation" outing quite a few of the city's gay men. The outraged LGBT community demanded an apology and staged multi-city protests across India. Finally India's TV regulatory board stepped up and fined the news channel and asked them to apologize.

## 'BORN THIS WAY' HITS THE WORLD



After months of hype, Lady Gaga shocked and amazed the world with her 'Born this Way' video that showed child birth in outer space. The song is being hailed as a 'gay anthem' and was an instant worldwide hit.

## NATALIE PORTMAN WINS THE OSCAR

A pregnant Natalie walked up to the stage to receive her Academy award, in what many called a "glorification of motherhood". She's charmed audiences worldwide with her performance in "Black Swan" which included a sizzling lesbian love making scene with co-star Mila Kunis.

## Section 377 updates

So what's on with Section 377 at the Supreme Court? The SC has taken up the case on a priority basis and the next hearing is on 18th April. The armed forces (which support the gay ban) have been kept out of the hearings, while groups of parents and psychologists have filed petitions against Section 377.



Mr. Kato's picture on the front page under a banner urging, "Hang Them."



## England wicket keeper comes out

Amidst the cricket world cup fever, came a heartening news for gays worldwide. Long considered a straight man's bastion, cricket finally saw its first international player come out as gay. England wicketkeeper Steven Davies announced this in a candid TV interview.



## UGANDA'S SORROW CONTINUES

Uganda grabbed international headlines for its homophobia once again as David Kato, the most outspoken gay rights advocate in a country where homophobia is so severe that Parliament is considering a bill to execute gay people, was brutally murdered in his own home. Mr. Kato had received a stream of death threats, his friends said. A few months ago, a Ugandan newspaper ran an antigay diatribe with

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# Ask Peer Queer

*I'm 20 and a student of an engineering college. I'm out to just a couple of my very close friends and they've been really nice to me. But there are some bullies in my class who constantly throw homophobic jibes at me because they suspect I'm gay. That's because I always hang out with my boyfriend who works in the city, and they've started suspecting. Initially I tried to ignore their questions and taunts, but that only increased their curiosity and the sharpness of their jibes. What is the best way for me now? To come out and face them openly? Will it bring a stop to the bullying or will it only make things worse if my sexuality becomes public knowledge in my college campus? I do not know anyone else in my college who's openly gay.*

## *How to disarm a bully,*

The reality is that there are those that know, and those that refuse to know that we are gay. Nonetheless, there are those that go for a lifetime believing that their secret is well-kept. Only, they look back and discover that they have alienated themselves- not the other way around. No one will claim that acknowledging others suspicions will be easily. It is a high hill, and only steeper, I suspect, with each jibe. Each glare from those who witness or over hear these jibes, yet refuse to come to your defense likely makes the situation more sour for you. And that's just it. Cowards use insult, injury and innuendo to coerce everyone- both targets and witnesses- into silence. And look, those bullies have proven effective at rocking your core. That constant anxiety can cultivate nihilism. Be not ashamed, each of us has faced such cowards.

Though I'd like to tell you that it gets better, even in the world of work, sadly, I cannot. Heck even adults face kid bullies and the adults who defend the indefensible. Bullies in school often go unchecked, get fed well at home, and grow into strong healthy bullies who have the power to use their jibes to control someone else's career. What DOES get better is YOU. For now, you must trust that this, too, shall pass. In your darkest moments

when you're anticipating an attack, suffering from the anxiety that at any moment the world around you could explode against you, then try to have compassion for the cowardly lot. See their jeers as sheer cries for help- little babies screaming for mommy's milk, or any one to come and feed their emptiness. Bullies feed on other people's pain. Bullies provoke pain on others by projecting their own feelings of inadequacy and insecurity onto others, and the always choose someone they assume to be relatively more vulnerable.

Bullies rely on silence for their effective coercion, yet this is a false form of power. At some point, we all realize that bullies to have to be confronted, because confrontation is actually their greatest fear. You have to confront them and make them come out of the closet as bullies who exploit and harass others, yet you should gather some allies. The point is that you do not have to come out to anyone. That's your business, and not the bullies to spread like kids on a playground. Confront them with the fact that they were too immature to simply ask you in the first place, and chose to conduct themselves in ways that they would not appreciate for themselves. Confront your other classmates about being mute witnesses. Confront any staff with the fact that this constant distraction threatens to compromise your schoolwork. You may have to make some new friends who have genuine empathy for your predicament. Yet, you may be surprised at the allies and friends already gathered around you, all waiting for you to trust them with your full self, not just bits and pieces. Altogether, your courage will help them get over the shame they will feel for publicly demonstrating such behavior. Moreover, you know that you are perfect just the way you are, so all the bullying is misguided gunk.

*In Solidarity and love,  
Lavender Bodhisattva*  
(Send in your questions to Lavendar Bodhisattva at  
[askpeerqueer@pink-pages.co.in](mailto:askpeerqueer@pink-pages.co.in))

# Resources

## NAZ DOST HELPLINE FOR GAY MEN.

Monday to Saturday 1-7 pm

The Naz Foundation also hosts weekly meetings and support groups for men.

Call for details (011-2981-2287)

## SANGINI HELPLINE

Tuesday noon 3 pm, Friday 6-8 pm

Sangini provides confidential advice for women who are attracted to women.

Call for details (011-6567-6450)

## ICWO LESBIAN HELPLINE (CHENNAI)

Monday – Friday 9.00 AM to 6.00 PM

A dedicated helpline for Lesbians by the ICWO (Indian community welfare organization) in association with Action Aid

Call for details(044-6551-5742)

## TARSHI HELPLINE

Monday-Wednesday 10 am-4 pm

Confidential and anonymous counseling and referrals on sexuality, sexual and reproductive health and rights issues.

Call for details (011-2437-2229)

## ALTERNATIVE LAW FORUM.

Mon- Fri, 9:30 am- 6:30 pm

The forum provides legal services related to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender rights.

122/4, Infantry Road, Bengaluru  
(2286-8757)

## LAWYERS' COLLECTIVE

Mon-Fri, 9am – 6pm

This collective works on issues related to discrimination on grounds of HIV and AIDS

First floor, 4A- MAH Road, Tasker Town, Shivajinagar, Bengaluru

(4123-4130)

## LESBIT

Sat 3:30- 6:30 pm, Sun 11:30 am – 6:30 pm

LESBIT is an organization that offers counseling for lesbians and the transgender community

Call for details (99452-31493)

# Happenings

## DELHI

### **GAY DELHI SUNDAY SOCIALS**

Sunday

A weekly social gathering for gay and bisexual men. For more information on venues and timings and to know about other gay events in Delhi, join the GayDelhi email list by sending a blank email to  
[gaydelhi-subscribe@yahoogroups.com](mailto:gaydelhi-subscribe@yahoogroups.com)

### **THE DELHI FRONTRUNNERS AND WALKERS**

Sunday

A weekly running/walking club for Delhi's LGBTI people. For more details email  
[frontdel@gmail.com](mailto:frontdel@gmail.com)

## MUMBAI

### **GAY BOMBAY SUNDAY MEET**

Sun, 6:00 pm

JATC (Just Around the Corner) Bandra West. Entry free. For more details, visit the GayBombay website.

## BENGALUROO

### **GAY RUNNERS AND BREAKFAST**

Sun, 8:30 am to noon

Gay runners meet at Cubbon Park and Airlines Hotel Contact: 98450-01168

### **SUPPORT GROUP MEETING**

Thur, 7-9pm

Good As You is a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender support group.

Mail [goodasyoublr@googlemail.com](mailto:goodasyoublr@googlemail.com)

### **SWABHAVA FILM NIGHTS**

Saturdays, 6pm

Queer themed feature films, short films and documentaries that generally won't make it to your nearest multiplexes. The screenings will be followed by a discussion. To confirm event call, 22230959.

Swabhava Trust, 4th Floor, MS Plaza I, 13th A Cross, 4th Main, Sampangiramnagar

### **WHAQ**

Wednesdays, 6pm

A weekly meeting for lesbian and bisexual women organized by We're Here And Queer..

Swabhava Trust, 4th Floor, MS Plaza I, 13th A Cross, 4th Main, Sampangiramnagar

# Other end of the shore

## *A mockery on TV9's gay sting operation*

By Chandra Moulee

*Are you fed-up with gay bashing and homophobic TV programs and articles which stigmatize and shows abysmal ignorance about people with a different sexual orientation? The latest one to follow is TV9's sting operation which grossly violated private lives of many people. So, I turn it around one hundred and eighty degrees.*

Here goes the story seen from the other end of the shore,

“A boy trying to pursue a boy is Common but Boys pursuing Girls has become a Fashion heterosexual Culture in Hyderabad is increasing drastically. All the heterosexual men in Hyderabad go to clubs or pubs once every week or ten days to celebrate. They Drink and Dance with whomever girl they want.

In a three star pub in Secunderabad where software employees, rich kids and students party on weekends. But there is a specialty to these parties, the people visit this club are heterosexuals. Having got to know about the Straight parties, our Half-witted TV team went to investigate and found the truth.

Meeting, drinking and partying like this on weekends has become a ritual to heterosexuals.

Obtaining private party permission as an excuse all heterosexuals gather and party. It might sound shocking to hear, but this is the reality. There are also very popular websites for heterosexuals on the internet, RomeoJuliet.net is the most famous website amongst others. The number of users from Andhra Pradesh in this site alone are exponential. More than ten thousands are from Hyderabad alone, who login, message, chat, meet and celebrate using this site. Any given time there are about thousand users online on the site from the city. Software Employees and students are most users who fall prey to this heterosexual culture.

Sexy pictures, fashionable clothes, thrilling behaviour and being able to communicate properly are the weapons used by a heterosexual to attract another heterosexual.

The picture that you see is of Rani who happens to be a student who has taken sexy pictures of herself and uploaded on the site to attract other heterosexual men. Rani who is a student at JNTU University and lives in the dormitory. Half-witted TV has trapped Rani after having seen the pictures and contact information that she uploaded on the profile.



*The transcript of the phone conversation between our male reporter and Rani is below:*

*Reporter:* Hello

*Rani:* Who is this?

*Reporter:* Is Rani there?

*Rani:* Tell me I am Rani speaking.

*Reporter:* You gave me this number on RomeoJuliet.net

*Rani:* Yes, tell me who is this where you are from?

*Reporter:* I live in Banjara Hills, Hyderabad where are you from?

*Rani:* I am currently out of station but I am coming back soon.

*Reporter:* When exactly are you coming back?

*Rani:* I am coming back on Monday or Tuesday. Tuesday morning hopefully.

*Reporter:* What are your vital status?

*Rani:* Five feet six inches tall and fifty eight kilograms.

*Reporter:* Is it five eight.

*Rani:* Five six, your height?

*Reporter:* I am five feet nine inches, What are you? Are you a active or passive.

*Rani:* I am a active.

*Reporter:* So you are a woman on top? What do you like?

*Rani:* Foreplay and riding, where do u stay?

## FROM THE BLOGOSPHERE

*Reporter:* I currently live in Banjara Hills.

*Rani:* Do you have place?

*Reporter:* ahhhhh...

*Rani:* Do you have place?

*Reporter:* I will call you when I have the place on Monday or Tuesday, I will only when I have a place. What do you do?

*Rani:* I study at JNTU

*Reporter:* JNTU? What do you do in JNTU?

*Rani:* I study M.Tech

*Reporter:* I can't hear you properly can you be louder?

*Rani:* I am studying M.Tech.

*The conversation ends here.*



The person in this picture is Raja who is a Software employee in a well known firm, good salary, lives in Miyapur and loves to go to heterosexual Parties.

The transcript of the phone conversation between our female reporter and Raja is below:

*Raja:* Hello, Who is this?

*Reporter:* Is Raja there?

*Raja:* May I know who I am speaking to?

*Reporter:* This is Shandhya speaking

*Raja:* Sandhya?

*Reporter:* You gave me your number in RomeoJuliet.net

*Raja:* oh.. ok Tell me

*Reporter:* Can you be a bit louder, I cant hear you.

*Rani:* Tell me...

*Reporter:* Where are you Raja ?

*Raja:* I am at Home currently tell me.

*Reporter:* Do you have a place now?

*Raja:* Yes but my parents are there as of now.

*Reporter:* Are your parents there?

*Raja :* Yes they will be here in an hour

*Reporter:* Ok What is your Age Raja?

*Raja:* I am twenty seven.

*Reporter:* Twenty seven oh... What do you like?

*Raja:* I am passive and you?

*Reporter:* I am also a passive.

*Raja:* Ok ok Good to know.

*Reporter:* What else do you like? What do you like on bed?

*Raja:* I am telling you, I am passive, what do you like?

*Reporter:* Ok...ok.



A lot of employees in higher positions, white collared workers and highly qualified students, are becoming slaves to lifestyle which is against "natural way". Taking this as an advantage some people are blackmailing them.

The man in the picture is Nikhil lives in Mehdipatnam works at a software firm, to be honest this is a part time job for him the actual job is blackmailing. Talking to new people getting sexual pleasures from them and then blackmailing them by taking pictures and videos of them and snatching money from the same people for those pictures and videos is Nikhil's Job. While some do it for excitement, some get spoilt by friends, others do it for the crave of money the remaining are vowed by the lust some of them have changed it into a business by capturing teenagers mind and get them into the hell and getting them into Anti Society lifestyle. A lot of clubs give permits to organize heterosexual parties without letting the rest of the world know."

*The special report ends here*

You could check the translated transcript of the program aired on TV9 here, hosted on Gaysi.

It is always easy to point fingers and blame others. Media outlets should have social responsibility and ethical approaches towards any issue that it reports about. They cannot go around and invade people's private life for TRP or sensational news. This post is not to bring hate against heterosexuals. This is to make us realise that every human is different and discriminating them for who they are is not humane and sane. (Moulee.net)

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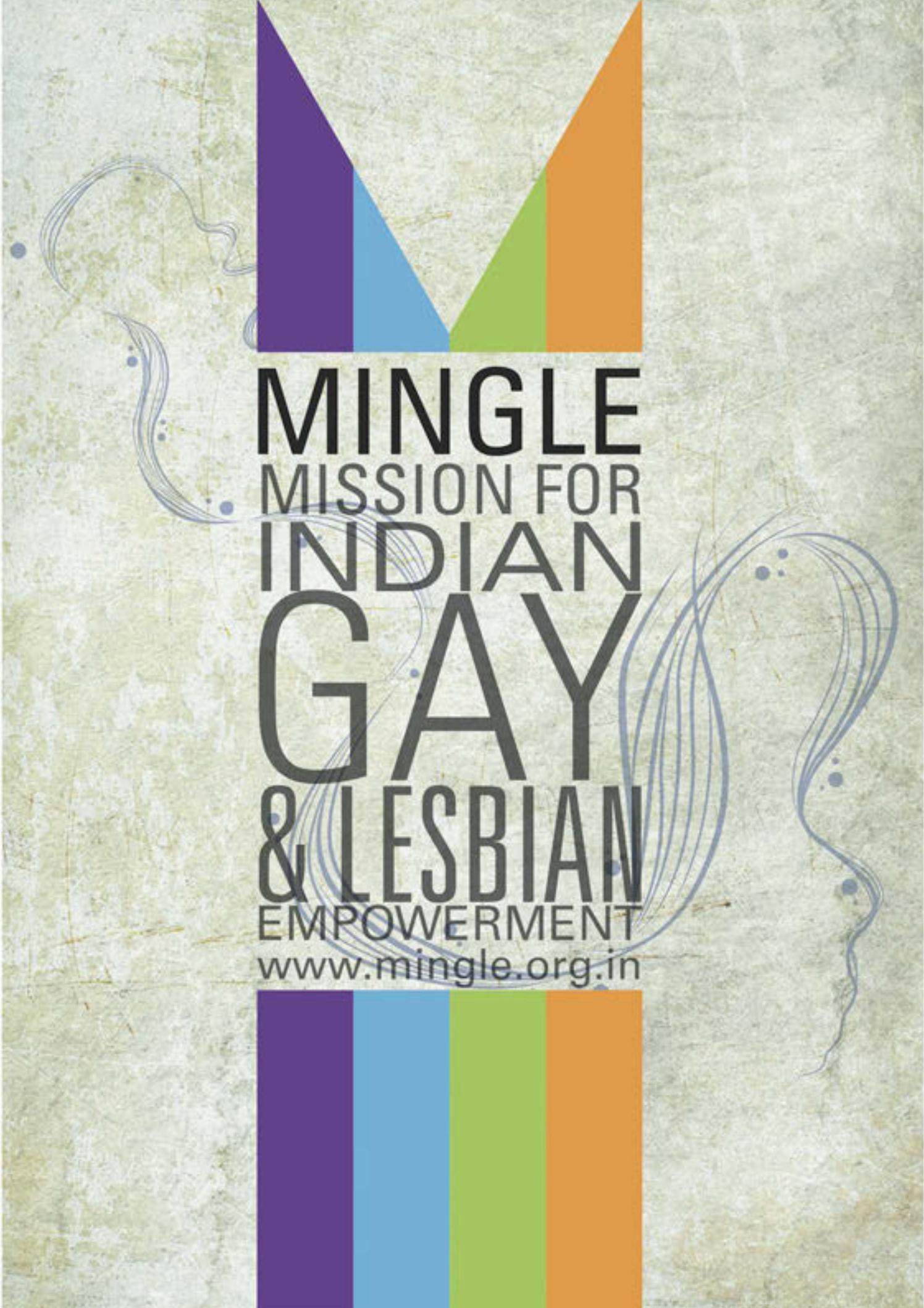
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